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Notes from meetings with some Church personnel
in the Philippines regarding East Timor
after the Asia - Pacific Consultation, Manila, Nov. 1987.

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PAPUA NEW GUINEA.

Fr. Francesco Panfilo, SDB. Provincial of the Filipino Salesian Province since April 1st, 1987. The Salesians in East Timor are now part of the Filipino Province. He is Italian.

I met Fr. Panfilo at the Salesian Provincial Office, Better Living Subdivision, Paranaque, Metro Manila on November 23rd. It was the first time I had met him. I went simply with the intentionof making contact with him, and to hear how he viewed the situation in East Timor. The Salesians in Papua New Guinea belong to the Filipino Province.

He visited East Timor from August 19th, 1987 for ten days. He visited"all the areas where the Salesians are working"; he went to, "the area where no other outside Church person has been in recent years". The Salesians there were very pleased that he was able to visit them. They wanted to show him all their works in East Timor.

He stated very early in our meeting that the situation in East Timor is "irreversible", though he added that he thought,"in their hearts the Timorese want independence." He later stated that he was using Fr. Locatelli's words when he stated that the situation was irreversible.

It was only through the efforts of his "delegate in Jakarta", Fr. Carbonel that he was able to gain acess to East Timor and to visit the Salesians there.[1] It is only through his delegate that he is able to maintain contact with the Salesians in East Timor. Fr. Carbonel, "knows many people in Jakarta", and, "somenne in the Intelligence Service", made it possible for him to visit East Timor.

He was concerned at the small number of priests ministering to a large number of people, and he spoke of the organizational changes that would be made to try and remedy this situation. Up till now the Salesians had worked out of two parishes, Bacau and Laclo. They will break these down into more parishes, and eight additional Salesians will be sent there in the near future. He was very impressed by the religiosity of the Timorese im comparison to the Filipinos. When he travelled from place to place, there was always a formal reception and he was made feel very welcome. He added that there was always a couple of Indonesian military personel present at these formal receptions. He met Fr. Joao de Deus. In a meeting with the Governor, Mario Carrascalao he was very warmly welcomed, and told by the Governor that he would be available to assist him in their plans to increase their numbers in East Timor. He was very pleased that the Salesians intended to increase their works in East Timor. The Salesian Sisters, known as the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians intend to commence work in East Timor during 1988.

He is impressed by Fr. Locatelli, and I would think often voiced Locatelli's opinions. I would suspect that he will follow Locatelli's advice on matters within East Timor. He said that he found Fr. Locatelli"very balanced". Fr. Locatelli maintains good

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relations with both the Indonesians and Fretilin. After August, Locatelli was to go and say Mass for the members of Fretilin, "and to meet with them again." He noted that Fretilin was,"no longer communist but for independence". Fr. Locatelli would like to call Fretilin out of the mountains, but "he is worried what might happen to them if they surrender". Fr. Panfilo expressed surprise that the Indonesians, "do not use Fr. Locatelli more because of his contacts with Fretilin." He said the Indonesians are aware that he meets Fretilin from time to time,but do not interfere or make things difficult for him because of that.

Fr. Panfilo expressed some amazement at the high level of militarization in the area where the Salesians are working. He said that there are around 10,000 Indonesian troops compared to 1,000 Fretilin. Locatelli believes it is in the interests of the Indonesians not to resolve the conflict in East Timor. Fr. Panfilo expressed this opinion a couple of times during the meeting. "If the Indonesians wanted to finish off Fretilin, they have the power to doso". But so much money is getting poured into East Timor. He likened it to a huge river, which has diminished to atrickle by the time it reaches the people, and passed through the hands of the Indonesians. There are no custom officers in Dili. Fr. Locatelli recently got two tractors and, "like everything else they go from Singapore direct to Dili and there are no further expenses, apart from a little paid to Indonesian officials in Dili." If the tractors had come through Jakarta a great deal more would have been charged in taxes.

Fretilin receive no arms from outside. They get them from the Indonesians.

There are questions of human rights abuses in East Timor. " There must be abuses if there are so many troops." The rape of women had taken place. Both Fr. Locatelli and a Belgium Salesian complain to the military when there are abuses. He said the Belgium gets very upset when such things happen, but the punishment is just that the Indonesian soldiers responsible are moved to another place. He recounted that he and Fr. Locatelli were travelling in a jeep to the mountains. On the way they passed two or three Indonesian soldiers with guns over their shoulders going the same direction. A short time later they passed some villagers coming down the road towards the soldiers, carrying bunches of bananas to be sold in the market. Panfilo asked Locatelli what would happen when the two groups come face to face. Locatelli replied that almost certainly the soldiers will take the bananas from the villagers.

Mgr. Belo,"is like someone who if he does speak he is damned, but on the other hand if he doesn't speak he is also damned". He is in a very difficult position.

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He believes the priests are gradually coming to accept him in spite of some of the strong feelings expressed at the time of his appointment as Diocesan Administrator. He referred to what he called, "the problem of the two Portuguese Jesuits", though he didn't name them he was obviously referring to Fr. Joao Felgueiras and Fr. Jose Martins. Mons. Belo's position is that their return to the Diocese is not a problem, but they are not to return to the seminary. The difficulty began when the Timorese students for the priesthood who went to Flores did badly in their philosophy. Belo believed this was because they had a poor knowledge of Bahasa Indonesia. He therefore instructed the Seminary Rector to teach more Bahasa in the Seminary. The Rector then started, "to spread stories that Mons. Belo wanted integration with Indonesia." This was the beginning of the deterioration in their relationship. He later referred to Fr. Magalhaes, who is a Salesian. He said Fr. Magalhaes was in need of a break. He was stopped from returning, "stopped is not really the right word", for this reason. Belo must tread lightly, and be loyal to his Diocesan priests. Though he is not so old, Panfilo thinks he has aged a great deal during these years. While speaking to him he had the impression that Belo had a lot more that he wanted to say, but then"he drew back.. he wanted to open his heart but..". Panfilo said it is very difficult there in Dili to talk openely with him. Next January 31st will be the centenary of the death of St. John Bosco, the founder of the Salesians. All the Salesian Bishops have been invited to Italy for the occasion. Belo had also been invited, and it is hoped that he will be able to attend. If he attends he will return through the Philippines, and Fr. Panfilo hopes to have better discussions with him then in a more relaxed situation.

I asked what were Mons Belo's needs at this time. He said that he spoke only with him about the needs in the area where the Salesians are working. He wants the Salesians to set up a cathechist centre, and to re open the printing press that was operated by the Salesians in Dili prior to 1975. The Salesians plan to return and re open their college, which had been vacated during the conflict between the Indonesian military and Fretilin. There are also plans to eventually set up a seminary within East Timor. He told me that there was a Timorese, named Agostinho Soares from Viqueque studying for the priesthood at the Salesian Seminary close to his Provincial Office. He had studied for the Diocesan clergy, but now had joined the Salesians, and would continue his studies in the Philippines until his ordination.

Fr. Panfilo said,"that there are rumours that Belo will soon be ordained bishop, and also that the Diocese will be divided into two Dioceses. One would be the Diocese of Dili; the other Bacau. I drew his attention to the relationship between the Vatican and the Diocese of Dili. He said that was " a very ticklish problem". The Indonesian Government would like Mons. Belo to become part of the Indonesian Conference of Bishops. He pointed out, that Mons. Belo attends these

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meetings though not in an official capacity. He said that, "Mons. Belo does not want to become an official member of the Indonesian Conference of Bishops. While in Jakarta, Fr. Panfilo met with the Nuncio. He said very little about this meeting except to say, the Nuncio was new and only in the position for a year and a half.

While in Dili Fr. Panfilo met with the Salesian alumni. The big problem worrying them was whether or not they could be members of the world wide alumni of Salesians if they accepted Pancasila. "They are the only organization in East Timor, which are registered because they accept Pancasila." [3] So Fr. Panfilo studied the Pancasila, and believed from what he could make out of the Pancasila, that it was not in conflict with the Gospel. He therefore informed them at the meeting, that as far as he was concerned there is no problem with their acceptability as members of the worldwide Salesian alumni. Their banner was obviously pro Indonesian. It carried the words Timor Timur, Indonesia. Though he wasn't able to understand all the speeches and discussion in the meeting as it was in Portuguese, Indonesia was repeatedly mentioned in a way that gave the impression to him that they were accepting of the Indonesians and even supportive. He referred to his observation that the children in East Timor under 12 or 15 years old do not speak Portuguese, but Bahasa Indonesian and Tetum. The older people speak Portuguese, but not Bahasa so well. Naturally, it takes time for people to accept the change they are faced with in East Timor, but given time this will happen, and already East Timorese are beginning to accept the Indonesian presence.

Fr. Panfilo said that he is one of the few religious Superiors that has been able to visit East Timor. There are some who are asking why the Salesians are getting this special treatment. A representative of the Salesian Superior General, later visited East Timor. A congregation of Sisters who have some link with the Salesians, known as the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians plan to begin a foundation in East Timor during 1988. One of their Sisters was also given access to East Timor during 1987 to investigate their future apostolate. At the time Fr. Panfilo was in Jakarta, the German Jesuit Provincial had been waiting for more than three weeks to get a visa to enter East Timor, and still was not able to go to East Timor. I asked Fr. Panfilo the reason for these tight restrictions regarding entry to East Timor. He answered by saying that when he returned to Jakarta from East Timor, he went to thank the official who had made possible his visit to East Timor.[4] He suggested to the official that it would be in the Indonesian Government's interest to make East Timor more accesible for outsiders.[5] The official told him that if the fundamentalist Moslems heard that Catholic priests are going to East Timor, they would want to send three or four of their own people for every priest. Fr. Panfilo commented," The Indonesians know they are not accepted by the East Timorese, the last thing they want is for Indonesian fundamentalist Moslems to go to East Timor".

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Fr. Panfilo made other observations throughout the course of the conversation and which I will note as a conclusion to this report. He had a copy of 'Timor Link' in his drawer, close at hand, as well as the document from CIIR, 'East Timor: A Christian Reflection.' He finds that many things written in those papers are true and accurate, but he believed that there were also exagerrations. He relied on some publications for his knowledge of the situation in East Timor before he visited there last August.

In the context of his belief that the younger people would be more accepting of the fact that they were part of the Indonesian Republic, he noted that there is a great deal of contact between Jakarta and East Timor. He referred to his plane trip to East Timor, and that he was accompanied by a group of scouts from East Timor who had gone to Jakarta for the Indonesian Independence celebrations in Jakarta. He referred to an incident in Jakarta in which students from East Timor had refused to do their exams as a sign of solidarity with their people. He gave the impression that he believed this type of action achieved little result, though he has sympathy for the situation in which the Timorese are caught.

He spoke of a Salesian brother, who was on the staff of the Salesian College until the heavy fighting between Fretilin and the Indonesians made it impossible to keep the College open. The Brother had been hurt very deeply by the Timorese who at some previous time were his students, but who had joined Fretilin and caused so much damage to the school. The Indonesians likewise raided the College and did damage to it. The College was damaged severly by both Fretilin and the Indonesians, but now the Salesians want to recommence work there. The Salesian Brother does not want to return to the College because he is so upset at what has taken place there. Fr. Panfilo stated that so many who were former students of that College have disappeared or been killed in the conflict.

The Timorese had been through a very difficult time. He took as an example, that in one of the Canossian communities, there was one Sister who had some family members killed by Fretilin, and another Sister whose family members had been killed by UDT.

One of the last comments that he made to me was that it is very hard to know what is in the hearts of the Timorese people.

He told me that he would visit Port Moresby sometime in February 1988, and he plans to revisit East Timor in May 1988.

1. Fr. Carbonel went to Jakarta sometime after he ended his term as Salesian Provincial of the Philippines during 1981. I met him in Port Moresby while he was still Provincial in 1981.

2. I am unsure if Fr. Panfilo meant that the two Jesuits are not to return to the Seminary,or just Fr. Felgueiras.

3. I am not sure what Fr. Panfilo meant by this, and whether he means the only religious organization, or he is referring to all organizations.

4. Cf. my meeting with Fr. Revilla, and the connections with Jusuf Wanandi. Perhaps it was he that Fr. Panfilo went to thank, though Fr. Panfilo did not name the official he went to thank.

5. I brought up the question of making East Timor more accesible to outsiders. I was talking about a whole range of outsiders, and not just Church people. The officials response to Fr. Panfilo's suggestion does not really respond to my query that it would be in Indonesia's interest if all is as well as it claims in East Timor to allow overseas visitors acess to East Timor.

Fr. Lazaro Revilla SDB., I met Fr. Revilla some weeks after meeting Fr. Panfilo. He was the Salesian Provincial from 1981 until 1987. He is from Spain. He is currently rector of the Salesian Seminary, known as the Don Bosco Center of Studies, and at Paranaque, Metro Manila. It was not our first meeting. In 1981, when he visited Port Moresby in his capacity as Provincial, I met him on a number of occasions. I went once to visit him with the specific purpose to discuss East Timor. He remembered that occasion without my needing to remind him. At the time in 1981, he had not visited East Timor, but was looking for a way to gain entry to East Timor. I was left with the impression on that occasion that he had little sympathy for Fretilin. He had little doubt that Fretilin was communist, and their cause should not be supported. That seemed to be his principal preoccupation with the situation of East Timor in 1981. I remember also that on the occasion that I went to inform the Diocesan authorities in Port Moresby of the coming visit of Mons. Lopes, the Vicar General, Fr. Bill Ryan recalled what Fr. Revilla had stated to him regarding Fretilin and its connections with world wide communism.

Fr. Revilla was friendly, and spoke at length of the Salesian achievements in Papua New Guinea. He was very pleased that Fr. Carbonel was based in Jakarta, and had established such good contacts with the Intelligence people in Jakarta. This had made his visits and Fr. Panfilo's visit to East Timor possible. He told me that when Carbonel had first gone to Jakarta, he lived with the Jesuits. "A very senior man in the Indonesian Government, called Jusuf Wanandi has a brother who is a Jesuit." He also spoke of a woman, who had been of great assistance to him when he first visited Jakarta as Provincial. She had helped him in all the many Government offices in his efforts to get to East Timor. She has since died of cancer, and "is the first benefactor of the Salesians in Indonesia."

Fr. Revilla had been consulted by the Nuncio in Jakarta at that time about the appointment of Fr. Carlos Belo as Administrator for the Diocese of Dili. Fr. Revilla said that he told the Nuncio that he was against the appointment on the grounds that he was too young. He concedes that he has handled the appointment well, that he is much more mature now, and that he will be able to handle the task. Fr. Revilla believes that Administrator of the Diocese of Dili is "one of the most difficult offices in the Church in the world at this time."

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He repeatedly stated that the situation in East Timor was irreversible, and he noted that, "even the Australian Government has now accepted the situation in East Timor." He seemed to be not so condemnatory of Fretilin as communist in comparison to what I remember him saying previously in 1981. I was still left with the impression that somehow he had little in the way of depth of feeling for what has happened in East Timor. He qualified his remarks a few times by saying that was how he saw the situation and that when I met Agostinho Soares, the Salesian seminarian, I would meet someone who had lived through the whole thing, " and hear what a real East Timorese feels about the situation." I think Fr. Revilla has a strong sense of building up the Salesian works in East Timor, and to get on with the job, and accept the situation as it is.

Br. Agostinho Soares SDB., is an East Timorese from Venilale. After Fr. Revilla's introduction, and the way he thought about the situation in East Timor, I was quite curious to know how this Salesian who is "a real Timorese" feels about the situation. I was left in no doubt that he has no sympathy for the Indonesians in East Timor. He is probably around 35-40 years old. He had intended to be a Diocesan priest, but changed to become a Salesian. I was only able to stay with him for a short time as he had other appointments. He was an English teacher at some stage; his English is quite good.

At the beginning of the troubles in East Timor, his family were in favour of Indonesian Rule. He has worked with the Indonesians since the invasion. He later specified this by saying that he had acted as an interpretor for foreign visitors. "The Indonesian army has done so many bad things in East Timor." He is surprised that so much information does get printed about East Timor outside the country, and he thinks that people outside have a lot of knowledge about what has happened in East Timor. The things that he had read since leaving East Timor are accurate in their description of life within East Timor.

When he left East Timor to begin studies in Manila, he was interviewed at length by the authorities in East Timor, and had to sign a statement, " which was against my conscience." He is concerned that his name be used in criticism of the Indonesians in East Timor, and that he would not be able to return to East Timor. He will be ordained a deacon in 1988, and the year after would return to East Timor. It is likely that some other Timorese wishing to be Salesians would come to join him during 1988. He is looking forward to having some fellow Timorese with him.

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I asked him if he had discussed the situation in East Timor with Fr. Panfilo on his return from East Timor last August. He responded by saying that visitors who go to East Timor do not know what is happening. He spoke of a Filipino Salesian, who since going to work in East Timor has changed his opinions, and is now critical of what the Indonesians are doing in East Timor.

I spoke to him of the concern that people have outside East Timor, that Msgr. Belo and some Church leaders may grow less critical of the Indonesians in return for financial assistance from the Indonesians. He said that all the Church people in East Timor know that they are receiving financial help as an attempt to silence their criticism, However, that will not change the thinking of the Church about the way the Indonesians are treating the people. The Church leaders will stay with the people, even though they accept financial assistance from the Indonesians. The Indonesians, " say that their first enemy in East Timor is the Catholic Church, and their second enemy is Fretilin." In comparing Msgr. Lopes and his strong stance against the Indonesians, with Msgr. Belo, he said the Msgr. Belo goes, "through different doors", and is able to compromise in a way that Msgr. Lopes was never able to do.

He appeared appreciative of my visit. I regretted the shortness of time that I was able to spend with him, but pleased to have made the contact, and I intend to keep correspondence with him before he returns to East Timor in 1989.

<u>The Justice and Peace Commission, Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines.</u>

Basil Peutalo, Cath. Comm. for Justice & Dev., and I briefly addressed on Nov. 21st, the meeting of the Justice and Peace Commission of the Major Religious Superiors. The Chairperson is Fr. Ben Alforque, a Filipino Missionary of the Sacred Heart, (MSC). There were around twenty representatives present, both female and male religious. The Salesians were not present, and I believe they have never participated in the Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines. The invitation to present the issue came through Fr. Ben Verberne MSC, a member of the Commission, and a Dutch priest of many years in the Philippines. There was no time to discuss the issue with the Commission. We merely raised it with them.

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A member of the Commission, Fr. Tom Marti, an American Maryknoll is Chairperson of the International Solidarity Network Desk, of the Justice and Peace Commission. We met him briefly outside of the meeting. He had some knowledge of the East Timor issue. He knows of the efforts of Arnold Kohen in the United States. During the meeting of the Commission he spoke,of the need for the Justice and Peace Commission to be more alert to international issues, such as East Timor, South Africa, and other issues which come across his desk. He also spoke of his difficulty in getting that information across to the Major Religious Superiors.

He expressed considerable regret that he had not been informed of the Asia Pacific Consultation on East Timor in Manila. We are to keep contact, and we receive a monthly newsletter from his office titled, 'International Solidarity News Digest'. He has a particular interest in US involvement in issues in the region. He reminded all in the meeting President Ford had visited Jakarta a day or two before the Indonesian invasion of East Timor.

Later I met him again, and told him of the possibility of Mons. Belo visiting Manila early 1988. He was very interested to make an attempt to visit Mons. Belo when he visits Manila, though was somewhat apprehensive of the reception he thought he might receive from the Salesians if he attempted to see Mons. Belo.

I think that it is very important to keep him informed on East Timor. He is an important channel through which to keep the Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines informed on East Timor. This will be important given that the Salesians in East Timor now have their Provincial in Manila, and that the Major Religious Superiors, at least a sizeable group of the Major Religious Superiors,appear committed and sensitive to justice and peace issues. Fr. Tom Marti intends to leave the Philippines in August 1988, when his time of appointment expires. During the meetin he called for some volunteers to join his desk. One of the new members is Fr. Ben Verberne already mentioned, and onewho I spent some time with talking about East Timor and the role of the Church there. He is very sympathetic.

During our meeting with the Commission, a Filipino brother responded to queries about the Salesian 'silence' on the issue by saying that at some time in the past he had discussed East Timor with the Salesian Provincial. He was told that it was a very sensitive issue, and therefore he thought that if criticism was made by the Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines it could possibly jeopardize the work of the Salesians in East Timor.

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Fr. Vincent Lumboan MSC at Surigao, and Fr. Rudy Abao MSC, Chaplain at Central Luzon State University, had both attended the General Chapter of the MSC's in September 87 at Rome. They both told me that the matter of East Timor had been raised during the Chapter by Bishop Cuskelly with the Indonesian Provincial, Fr. Suwatan. He apparently asked if the MSC's in Indonesia had looked at the possibility of working in trouble torn East Timor, and if Fr. Suwatan had some information on East Timor. Fr. Vincent Lumbo an said that Fr. Suwatan said that he had no information at all about East Timor. Fr. Rudy Abao thought that probably he did not want to know anything about East Timor !

Fr. Rudy Abao appears to be involved with many human rights organizations throughout Luzon in the Philippines. He is interested to get information on East Timor. He has some links with HASSA, the Australian equivalent of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace.

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